National Canners Association

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Information Letter

For N. C. A. Members

Membership Letter 22. July 13, 1923.

Meeting of Special Committee.

The special committee appointed to consider the matter of swells and spoiled canned foods is to hold another meeting in Chicago on the 15th instant. The industry will be kept advised of any action taken by this committee.

Coal Situation.

Secretary Hoover has addressed a communication to the trade associations, urging coöperation among their members to secure advance storing of coal during the light consuming season. However, the canning industry has no doubt already taken care of this very necessary requirement.

New Chief of the Bureau of Chemistry.

The Secretary of Agriculture has announced the appointment of Dr. C. A. Browne as Chief of the Bureau of Chemistry, thus filling the resignation of Dr. Alsberg something like two years ago, since which time Mr. W. G. Campbell has creditably filled the position of Acting Chief. Dr. Browne will assume this position about October 1st.

This appointment is peculiarly pleasing to all. Dr. Browne holds a high position among research chemists and probably has no superior among the agricultural chemists of America. Moreover, he is distinguished for his broad education and general culture. He has contributed much to several departments of agricultural research and is particularly well-known because of his contributions to the literature of sugar.

Dr. Browne is 53 years of age, having been born in North Adams, Mass., in 1870. He was graduated from Williams College in 1892 and took the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Goettingen University in Germany in 1901. He first became known among agricultural chemists by researches conducted in the Pennsylvania State Experiment Station in 1895-1902. From 1902-1906 he was chemist of the Louisiana Sugar Experiment Station and for two years thereafter was Chief of the Sugar Laboratory of the Bureau of Chemistry. Since that time he has been Chemist in charge of the Sugar Trade Laboratory in New York City which is maintained jointly by buyers and sellers of sugar, and acts as referee in questions relating to the sale of sugar.

His experience, therefore, has included research work done under the auspices of Federal and State organizations, as well as extensive industrial and commercial relations.

A New Method of Combatting Pea Aphis.

A confidential resumé has been received by the Bureau of Raw Products Research, from the United States Department of Agriculture entomologist in charge of the pea aphis investigation in Wisconsin. An entirely new type of machine has been devised for combatting aphis, and preliminary reports indicate that eighty per cent. of the aphids had been collected from the vines and destroyed by its use. Of special interest to canners is the fact that this machine does not involve the use of any spray, dust, or other insecticide. It is drawn by one horse, thus reducing the damage to the vines to a minimum; is operated by one man, thus reducing the cost of operation.

While it is too early for a prediction of results, it may be that the lead which has been opened up through the Wisconsin work will result in the solution of the problem of practical and economical control of aphis on canners' peas.

Editors Favorable to Canned Foods.

The San Francisco Bulletin of July 2nd carries the following editorial which will be of extreme interest to our members:

"CANNED FOODS.

"One of the greatest triumphs of medical science mentioned during the course of the recent convention is the complete elimination of the deathly 'B. botulinus' poison from all commercially canned goods. To the greatest canned-food-eating nation on the face of the earth it means a sense of perfect safety, and it also means hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. In California alone there is a large army of workers, the sale of whose product is made secure by this victory of science. Thus the bacteriologist, working quietly in his laboratory, may not only find the means of saving human life, but may save untold millions of invested capital, as well as making employment sure for hundreds of thousands of producers."

Undoubtedly the industry is making progress in the long up-hill pull in an effort to get canned foods before the consumers in the proper light.

Crop Hazard.

Word from many sections of the country is carrying discouraging news from canners of the yield per acre of crops which are now being harvested. In many other sections where later crops are grown for canning purposes, there is noted a tone of discouragement in the prospects for an average yield. The conditions confronting a great many of the canners this year emphasizes quite forcibly the advisability of setting up on their books a reserve for crop hazard. The industry is very seriously affected at recurrent periods by climatic and other natural conditions which greatly affect the production of the necessary raw materials. Canners well realize that short crops cause increased production expense not possibly foreseen at the season of the year when estimated costs of the coming pack are made.

It is evident that if a canner produces a large pack one year and the reverse a year or two following, good business judgment and sound accounting practices will require the canner to set up a reserve to take care of this hazard. At this time we desire to call the attention of our members to the fact that crop

failure is a real hazard that affects the individual canner more frequently than many other hazards of his business on which he carries insurance. Many canners never experience a loss from fire, but without exception, they all suffer loss from shortage of raw material through climatic conditions, even though their business experience may not run for more than a few years period of time.

Medical Writers Informed.

The attitude of many medical writers is friendly to the canning industry, but in some cases they lack full information on the subject. The letter quoted below emphasizes how this situation is being met.

"My attention has been called to an article of yours (doubtless a syndicate article), which appeared in --------- June 17, in which you speak of the convenience and some of the advantages of canned foods. I am afraid the article is written in such a way that it does not carry to the uninformed reader exactly the meaning you intend to convey.

"It is true that you say that there are only about twenty-five deaths from botulism in the United States, but the ordinary reader, without a basis of comparison, is likely to think of that as a considerable number.

"It is true that you say home canned foods are responsible for more outbreaks of botulism than those that are commercially canned. You do not, however, call attention to the fact that the outbreaks from commercially canned foods are limited almost entirely to two articles of food, the process of which is now understood and the possibility of the disease recurring is not to be expected.

"You say a great deal about ptomaine poisoning. Is it not a mistake to write popular articles about ptomaine poisoning when such leading authorities as Rosenau, Vaughan, and Jordan, of this country, and Savage in England, state emphatically that there is no record of illness from so-called ptomaine poisoning and that the word is a misnomer? Would it not be better, in popular articles, to spread this information and discuss illness due to specific types of bacteria?

"Moreover, your article gives the impression that ptomaine poisoning (by which you doubtless mean paratyphoid and similar diseases) is caused by canned foods. We have no record of the occurrence of such diseases from canned foods in this country.

"Sir William Willcox recently made the statement that in all of his experiences in the recent war, not a case of illness from canned foods was reported in the British Army. It seems, therefore, that the following paragraph, taken from your article, is peculiarly unfortunate:

> "'What might be called "the Tin Can Tribulation Trio" are, in the order of their frequency, digestive upsets, ptomaine poisoning, and botulism.'

"The digestive upsets are certainly far less frequent from canned foods than from other foods. Ptomaine poisoning has no meaning in itself. If you refer to paratyphoid and similar diseases, there is no record of their having been caused by canned foods in this country, while there are frequent outbreaks from foods which have not been canned.

"It is true that more outbreaks of botulism have been caused by canned foods in America than by foods that have not been canned. But even here, as I have indicated above, it would seem that your method of treatment has not been such as to give the right impression to readers."

Supposed Canned Foods Victim Dies of Heart Attack.

One of the Kansas City newspapers carried the story recently of the death of a man from eating canned tongue. This case was promptly investigated by the Association as soon as it was called to our attention, and the operative found that death was due to dilation of the heart and neither canned foods nor anything else that the man had eaten had contributed in any way to his illness and death.

Good Word for Canned Foods.

In England there is an organization known as the Institute of Certificated Grocers, Inc., the president of which is The Right Honorable Viscount Leverhulme, Hon. F.G.I. They have just favored us with a copy of their house organ, in which the matter of vitamins in canned foods is discussed in the following complimentary manner:

"Vitamins--Do not, I would say, be intimidated by any talk about vitamines; it is considerably overdone. * * * Pray remember that the amount of vitamins required is infinitely minute, that we do not know their chemical constitutionm and that they are lurking about in many different kinds of food, so that if you feed fairly well and miscellaneously you cannot avoid getting enough of them.** * The proved presence of vitamines in fresh fruits and vegetables, and the fact that they are volatile and driven off at a certain degree of heat, has led to the assumption that they are absent from bottled foods and from preserved fruits and vegetables. There is no evidence of that, and I do not believe it. * * *Well, with the apotheosis of the vitamines we have had from some quarters, the anathematisation of tinned food and canned goods. Utterly nonsensical attacks have been made on them. We have been warned that ptomaines may be hidden in them. Now, I venture to assert that for every one case of ptomaine poisoning due to tinned foods, there have been a dozen due to fresh foods. Tinned foods are protected up to the moment of consumption from invasion by the terrible Gaertner bacillus, or other disease causing bacilli, in a way that animal food from a dirty back-yard, slaughter-house, or stored in sme dusty and fly-haunted larder or cupboard is not and can not be. They are prepared with the utmost skill and care, and may be eaten with the utmost confidence. Their nutritive value has also been attacked. They may not be up to the standard of a prime sirloin of English beef, but they have been an inestimable boon to the people of this country, and will, I am sure, hold their own and increase in favor in days when domestic cookery becomes more difficult for certain classes, and when an increase of our arable land in order to increase native corn supply will diminish the supply of home-grown meat."

Grapefruit Section Organized.

The grapefruit canners of Florida and Porto Rico held a meeting in the office of the Association on Tuesday of this week and organized a Grapefruit Section of the National Canners Association. Canners attending the meeting repre-

-sented practically 99% of the pack of grapefruit of Florida and Porto Rico.

Ralph Polk, of the Polk Company, Miami, Florida, was elected chairman of the Section, Edmund Rushmore, of the Spanish-American Fruit Company, New York City, vice chairman, and C. E. Street, of the Florida Grapefruit Canning Company, Bradentown, Florida, secretary.

Every canner present who was not already a member of the Association, made application for membership, thereby adding nine new members to the Association. All present members who pack grapefruit will automatically be members of the Section.

Advertising Campaign Contemplated.

While in the city, the grapefruit canners organized the National Grapefruit Canners Association for the purpose of conducting a nation-wide advertising campaign to acquaint consumers with the convenience and desirability of canned grapefruit. The following were unanimously elected as officers of the Association:

President: Mr. Ralph Polk.
Vice President: Mr. Edmund Rushmore.
Secretary and Treasurer: Mr. C. E. Street.

A committee of five was appointed as a Committee on Definitions, Standards, and Inspection for canned grapefruit, these standards to form a basis for the proposed advertising campaign.

United States Navy in the Market for Canned Foods.

Bids on 150,000 pounds of canned bacon, under Schedule No. 1065 (Supplies and Accounts), will be opened at the Navy Department at 10 a.m., July 24, 1923; and on August 7, 1923, at 10 a.m., bids on 711,000 pounds of assorted jams, under Schedule No. 1064 (Supplies and Accounts), and on 341,000 pounds of canned spinach, under Schedule No. 1066 (Supplies and Accounts), will be opened.

Canners interested should communicate with the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, Navy Department, Navy Building, Washington, D.C., and request blanks for bids on the respective schedules above mentioned.

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